

This, too, shall pass

One day King Solomon decided to humble his most trusted minister, Benaiah ben Yehoyada. He said to the minister, “Benaiah, there is a certain ring that I want you to bring to me. I wish to wear it for the holiday of Sukkot, so you have six months to find it.”

“If it exists anywhere on earth, your majesty,” replied Benaiah, “I will find it and bring it to you. But what makes the ring you seek so special?”

“I want a ring that has magic powers,” answered the king. “If a happy man looks at it, he becomes sad, and if a sad man looks at it, he becomes happy.” King Solomon knew that no such ring existed in the world, but he wanted to give his minister a little taste of humility.

Spring passed and then summer, and still Benaiah was unable to find such a ring anywhere, though he searched high and low throughout the land. On the night before Sukkot, Benaiah decided to take a walk in one of the poorest quarters of Jerusalem. There, he passed by an old merchant who had begun to set out the day’s wares on a shabby carpet. “Have you by any chance heard of a magic ring that makes the happy wearer forget his joy and the broken-hearted wearer forget his sorrows?” asked Benaiah.

He watched the old merchant take a plain gold ring from his carpet and engrave something on it. When Benaiah read the words on the ring, his face broke out in a wide smile.

That night, the entire city welcomed in the holiday of Sukkot with great festivity. “Well, my friend,” asked King Solomon, “have you found what I sent you after?” All the ministers laughed and Solomon himself smiled.

To everyone’s surprise, Benaiah held up a small gold ring and declared, “Here it is, your majesty! This ring will make a happy man sad and a sad man happy.”

As soon as Solomon read the inscription, the smile vanished from his face. The merchant had inscribed three Hebrew letters on the gold band: gimel, zayin, yud, which began the words “*Gam zeh ya’avor*” — “This, too, shall pass.”

At that moment, Solomon realized that all his fabulous wealth and tremendous power were fleeting, and that one day he and all he owned would be nothing but dust.

King Solomon’s quest to humble Benaiah had taught both Benaiah and Solomon an important and humbling lesson: Everything in this world is temporary. Whatever is happening in life — whether easy or hard, happy or sad, pleasant or unpleasant — shall pass. Good times will pass, and troubling times will pass. Remembering this truth during the good times helps to keep you focused on deeper aspects of life; and remembering that all things shall pass during difficult times gives you the hope and strength to persevere and turn your troubles into triumphs.